

CATALYST

FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

June 1972

No. 4

POWER LINES FOR RURAL PROGRESS

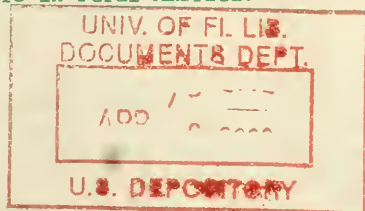
Few activities of the Federal Government have had more beneficial impact upon rural development than the electric and telephone loan programs of the Rural Electrification Administration. Since 1936, the agency has lent \$8.6 billion and provided technical assistance to more than 1,900 rural utilities to provide these vital services, without which there can be no rural progress. Cooperation with other local organizations for community development is a logical extension of the borrowers' basic purposes.

REA-financed utility services improve rural living conditions, increase farm income levels and agricultural productivity, create expanded markets for urban-produced goods and services, and open rural areas to establishment and expansion of commercial recreation, business and community services.

REA urges its borrowers to take leading roles in community development because we believe lasting rural renewal is initiated, directed and carried out on local levels. Economically healthy communities improve loan security and further the objectives of the Rural Electrification Act.

REA-financed systems provide invaluable support to community development groups, including housing surveys, office and clerical aid, transportation, meeting space, location of industrial sites and work forces, promotional activities and in securing technical and financial assistance, locally and in Washington through REA and other Federal agencies.

President Nixon, asking for rural development enabling legislation, said: "the vitality of rural America (is) at the heart of our Nation's strength. It is essential that we preserve and expand that vitality in the years ahead." We at REA support the President's concern, and pledge to invest our resources in every way we can to assure the improved quality of life in rural America.



David A. Hamill
 DAVID A. HAMILL, Administrator
 Rural Electrification Administration

CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
PAY OFF FOR ARKANSAS COMMUNITY

The people of Stone County, Arkansas, can say with pride, "We did it ourselves!" The results of their combined efforts are impressive.

* Native craft sales have jumped from near zero in 1961 to an estimated \$200,000 a year a decade later.

* The annual Ozark Foothills Craft Guild Show and Sale now in its ninth year, draws 50,000 to 75,000 persons and has been featured on nationwide television.

* Numerous folk music festivals draw visitors and bring new income to the area.

* A \$3-million-plus folk cultural center in Mountain View is to be completed this Fall.

* A major new cavern at Blanchard Springs will open to the public next year.

How many years did it take to reach this stage? A dozen or more.

Some say it began when Stone County leaders decided in 1959 to generate income from the rich social and natural resources of their community. The Stone County development council, based in Mountain View, proved to be catalytic. Local meetings led to the appointment of subcommittees and then action.

As early as 1960, folks started raising money for a hospital and two years later it was built, with 40 beds.

In 1961, two dozen leaders visited other folk craft centers to study how to develop native crafts into a flourishing industry. A year later, leaders from seven counties established an Ozark Foothills Handicraft Guild.

An area tourist committee set up a dogwood tour.

Besides the craft guild show and dogwood tour, local tourist-attracting events include the Arkansas Folk Festival, the White River Water Carnival, the Ozark Poultry Festival, the Family Camping Show, the Traveler Folk Theatre and Pioneer Day. Local folks taking advantage of their cultural and natural resources.

The Blanchard Springs Caverns complex being developed by the Forest Service influenced a number of projects in the area. A visitor center, main trail, campgrounds, swimming beach, amphitheatre and a three-mile hiking trail are built or underway.

Other signs of progress in the area:

A new sewer and water system in Mountain View; a new bank; a new motel; three new churches; two paved highways; planning for a vocational-technical training school; a State park and camping area; expansion and improvement of the Mountain View airport and construction of a city park.

Wide public involvement over several years has paid off.

Several public agencies, notably the Economic Development Administration, local and State governments, and U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies were able to help local people realize the potentials of their culture and their environment.

SOMETIMES A COMMUNITY CAN BUILD BETTER AFTER
IT HAS RECOGNIZED A NEED FOR HELP

For a lot of communities, group pride is the critical ingredient needed to trigger the processes of development and growth.

Yet pride could be a stumbling block to progress if it is not carried deftly by a community. If a town is too proud to ask for help, well.....

Listen to Mayor Bob Nichols' description of Southwest City, Missouri, before that community of 500 persons decided to ask for help:

"In the early '60s, land prices averaged \$50 to \$100 an acre, unemployment was about 6 percent and there were 25 empty homes inside our city limits. Just about everything was in need of repair.

SERIOUS PROBLEMS

"Our streets, water system and open sewage were becoming serious problems. There was no industry and few recreational facilities and the schools were inadequate.

"Our purpose for existing as a community was in question."

Then Southwest City asked for help and the University of Missouri Extension Service, in response to that request and others, stationed a community development specialist, Don Thacker, in the area. Thacker, says Mayor Nichols, got the people "inspired and working." And he opened their eyes to the help available through government agencies and services that Mayor Nichols said they'd never known.

The first breakthrough was a 50 percent grant for a sewer system under the accelerated public works program of the Department of Commerce.

The town readily voted the necessary bonds for the improvement.

"But it is unlikely that we would have known of this program, at least in time to benefit from it, without the assistance of the community development specialist," the mayor says.

FURTHER PROGRESS

By asking for help, Southwest City had found the key to its future. Soon its water system was improved and extended, new schools were built, new industries sprang up, bank deposits doubled in five years and land (when available) sold for \$100 to \$300 an acre. Park area and the construction of new homes increased as unemployment decreased.

Thacker wasn't doing all this--the folks of Southwest City were doing it, and with vigor.

Perhaps their most successful achievement was the landing of a manufacturing plant employing 200 persons.

"It took hundreds of hours of work, more debt and the combined efforts of the city industrial development corporation, city government and a half dozen government agencies to get the job done," Mayor Nichols says, "But together, we did it."

Now Southwest City has a new kind of pride--the kind that comes from building a better community....smart pride.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

POSTAGE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE



- 4 -

ENVIRONMENTAL IDEA GROWS INTO
ACTIVE PROJECT IN COLORADO

Mrs. Carl Boyd of Elk Creek, Colorado, was concerned about protecting and enhancing the beauty of the valley in which she lived. She didn't know where to begin so she talked it over with a friend. They decided to ask another friend to chair a public meeting on the subject in Grand Junction.

That first meeting on Jan. 15, 1966 drew an unexpectedly large crowd of concerned citizens of all ages. Some were intent on controlling pollution, some in preserving wildlife, some in protecting trees, some in promoting recreation. All were lovers of the outdoors, all were aware of the need to do something and all needed a place to start.

Further meetings were scheduled. As the group talked it over they decided to narrow their attention to the land adjoining the Colorado River. They called their project Greenbelt and, without money or formal organization, began to take every opportunity to support actions that furthered their cause and to oppose those which were damaging.

Study groups were formed within existing organizations. Speakers were brought in, tours of the river were organized, slide talks were presented, and surveys were begun to select the best sites for overlooks, picnic areas, boat ramps and wildlife reservations.

Special days were set aside in Grand Junction to celebrate the Greenbelt concept. The city's newspaper published a special supplement on the theme.

As community after community joined the Greenbelt effort and local enthusiasm mounted, Greenbelters began probing all possible sources of public and private assistance. For openers, a private foundation and the county are matching land and water conservations funds so that some key land could be bought.

Greenbelt Inc., a nonprofit organization, was formed to enlist more members and more support.

Mrs. Boyd's idea, planted in that first meeting six years ago, has taken root and is beginning to bear fruit.